

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Masoud Barzani of the
Kurdistan Region in Iraq
October 29, 2008

President Bush. President Barzani, welcome back to the Oval Office. It's been a while since we have seen each other, but we have talked on the phone quite frequently, and the reason why is because you've played a very instrumental part in the development of a free Iraq. And I thank you for your leadership, and I thank you for your personal friendship.

We had a discussion today on several major topics. We talked about the progress on the election law and on the hydrocarbon law, but we also talked about the status of forces agreement, called the SOFA. President Barzani has been a very strong advocate of the Iraqi Government passing the SOFA, and I appreciate that.

I informed the President we received amendments today from the Government. We're analyzing those amendments. We obviously want to be helpful and constructive without undermining basic principles. And I remain very hopeful and confident that the SOFA will get passed. And, Mr. President, you get a lot of credit for your leadership on that issue.

So I'm proud to welcome you back here. Again, I thank you very much for your courage and your leadership.

President Barzani. Thank you very much, Mr. President. It's good that there has been another opportunity for us to visit with you again. I am here to convey the gratitude

of the Iraqi people in general and the people of Kurdistan in particular, for the brave decision that you've made to rid us of this dictatorship.

We are very grateful for all the brave souls, women and men in uniform, who paid their dear lives in the process. And we are very grateful to the American people and to you, Mr. President, for this sacrifice.

And despite the fact that there remain some major problems, we have also to look at all the big achievements that have been made thus far. Let's look at the elections and the Constitution that has been ratified. So these are major achievements that we are proud of. And we are determined to solve all the problems that still exist, according to the Constitution.

And in terms of SOFA, we do believe that it is in the interest of the Iraqi Government, it's in the interest of this country, and we have been and we will continue to support it and support its ratification.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Barzani spoke in Kurdish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Graduation Ceremony at the Federal Bureau of Investigation
Academy in Quantico, Virginia
October 30, 2008

Thank you. Mr. Director, thank you for your kind introduction, and thank you for your leadership. Proud that you invited

your wife Ann here to be with us. I thank the Attorney General for joining us today.